Development Discourse and Popular Articulations in Urban Gujarat

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses how marginalized groups in the Indian state of Gujarat make sense of hegemonic discourses about national development in light of their own experiences and material circumstances. For many, the idea of development resonates even when they do not experience material progress in their lives. This partial hegemony of development discourse can be explained by utilizing the concept of 'political articulation'. This captures the political process by which parties succeed, at specific historical moments and under certain circumstances, in joining together different, even potentially conflictual interests by referring to a common idea and project. The article focuses on Ahmedabad city where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has created a cross-caste bloc through the trope of development. The Party has been particularly effective in linking the idea of development to people's mundane concerns of security, identity and spatial order. However, anxieties about the degradation of labour and its conditions such as casualization, informalization, and socio-spatial marginalization disrupts this common sense and has weakened the hegemony of the BJP's model of development.

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Introduction

When marginalized castes and classes in India share unequally in the material gains of development, how do they respond to the invocation of development in political discourse? Scholars have pointed to the 'polyvocality' of development as a discourse of power and entitlement.[1] Yet how do marginalized groups make sense of this hegemonic discourse in light of their own experiences and material circumstances?

We address this question through in-depth interviews with marginalized groups in Gujarat, specifically Other Backward Castes (OBCs), Dalits, and Muslims. In Gujarat, OBCs constitute approximately 40 percent of a total population of 62.7 million, while Dalits form 7.1 percent of the population and Muslims roughly 9 percent.[2] Dalits and Muslims are over-represented among the poor; among Dalits 70 percent are employed as casual labourers or are self-employed in the informal economy[3] and more than 50 percent live at or below the poverty line,[4] while roughly 38 percent of Muslims live below the poverty line. Despite the ongoing material, cultural and symbolic subordination within the caste-class-religious order of liberalizing Gujarat, electoral polls since 2002 have shown a drift among lower caste groups towards the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has increasingly sought to position itself as a party of development. There is no comparable data on the Muslim vote for the BJP,

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[1] Cooper and Packard 1997, Sharma 2008; Subrahmanian 2009; Cruikshank 1999; Ferguson 1996.
[2] Census of India 2011.
[3] Shah 2002, 1391.
[4] Ghai 2012.

but anecdotal and specialist evidence suggests a growing shift among some Muslim voters towards the BJP.[5] Given that the BJP's leadership and social base is largely upper caste Hindu, both within Gujarat and across India, it is important to assess which marginalized groups tend to support the BJP and its development agenda, and why.[6]

We use a combination of secondary historical and interview data to move beyond voter-based studies in order to show how 'party articulation'[7] produces complex forms of identification among subordinated groups with the ideas and imaginaries of dominant castes and classes. Put in Gramscian terms, our concern is with how hegemony is produced in contexts where inequalities are pervasive and growing.

As a capitalist developmental state Gujarat offers a glimpse into one of many possible futures for global capitalism in the so-called developing world. The architect of its recent development agenda, Narendra Modi, is both the leader of the BJP and, since 2014, the Prime Minister of India. Although Gujarat has a long history of business-friendly governments, through the liberalization years of the 1990s and beyond Gujarat's global reputation has grown. Its high growth rates in industrial and rural sectors have been fuelled by a strong export-oriented policy aimed at attracting foreign investment, light state regulation of business, and a relatively unorganized, low-wage labour force. Although Gujarat's developmental policy regime is rooted in the policies of the Congress Party during the 1970s and 1980s, it has been more firmly consolidated under the Hindu nationalist BJP since 1992, and specifically since 1995 under the leadership of Modi. This stridently pro-business, deregulated market model is politically bolstered by two related factors: first, a historical legacy of weak working class links that was reinforced by the retrenchment of textile workers since the 1980s, and second, the infusion of a specific idea of 'development' into the reordering of caste and Hindu-Muslim relations in the state, epitomized by the ideological and spatial transformation of both within Ahmedabad. The reordering of caste and religious relations in the city have to be understood in the context of the long history of communal violence in the state which was punctuated by the unprecedented state-sponsored organization of violence against Muslims in 2002. In February 2002 large-scale communal violence across many parts of Gujarat followed the burning of a train carriage in which 58 Hindu pilgrims were killed. Muslims were blamed and nearly 2000 people were killed in the orgy of violence that followed. Several members of the ruling BJP were later indicted for their involvement, while eyewitness accounts and successive investigations have revealed the coordinated nature of the attacks, including the high level participation of BJP ministers. This event has left its mark not only upon Hindu-Muslim relations, but equally importantly, has enabled the BJP to consolidate a pan-Hindu voting bloc by referring to Muslims as a "security threat".[8]

Our goal is to understand how and why, in the years of relative urban peace since 2002 during which communal riots have virtually disappeared, such a bloc has proved so durable. One measure of this durability is voting patterns; as table 1 illustrates, lower caste support for the BJP is fairly stable at between 27 and 30 percent among Dalits, and 54 percent among OBCs. These figures suggest that there is some stability to this not-negligible support, although they also show that Dalits are less likely to uphold this support for the BJP.

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[5] Dhattiwala 2014.

[6] See 'Gujarat Polls: Political Parties Woo Dalit Community for Support,' *http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/gujarat-polls-political-parties-woo-Dalit-community-for-support/1/234539.html (accessed on November 12, 2014).*

[7] We define articulation as the process whereby parties under certain conditions can successfully join together different, even opposed constituencies into relatively stable political blocs (Deleon, Desai and Tugal 2015). The linking of constituencies – here classes, castes, neighbourhoods, communities – is established through political work – speeches, mobilizing votes, mediated images etc.

[8] Shani 2005; Berenchot 2012.

TABLE 1 HERE

Several commentators have argued that the BJP's remarkable electoral success and hegemony rests upon its ability to incorporate marginalized castes and classes into its communal (Hindutva) agenda.[9] Dalits and OBCs are said to aspire to inclusion in the BJP's fold, identifying Muslims as their primary antagonists and threat to their security. Others argue that Dalits and OBCs vote for the BJP because of the resources and patronage offered by the ruling party.[10]

While both arguments contain some truth, our comparison of Dalit, OBC and Muslim perceptions and subjectivities reveals a highly fragmented picture of support and ambivalence. Aside from the historical contextualization of our argument, we draw upon thirty-two in-depth interviews that we conducted between August and December 2012 with two generations of Dalit, OBC and Muslim men and women employed in the urban informal economy of Ahmedabad (see Appendix 1). Although most participants were lower caste Hindus, we conducted interviews with several Muslim men and women who resided in primarily Hindu localities or within Muslim areas of Ahmedabad in order to gain a better understanding of how the rhetoric and practices of development resonated with their lives, particularly in the aftermath of the repression and severe exclusion that followed the communal violence of 2002. Moreover, the generational emphasis in our interviews allowed us to elicit temporally sensitive reflections from our respondents, who by relating their life stories provided insight into how the idea of 'development' resonated with their changing fortunes and mobility across generations.

Although we sought to explore the more mundane aspects of how subordinate castes make sense of, and relate the idea of development to aspects of their lives, conducting our interviews during the run-up to the December 2012 Gujarat State Assembly elections was extremely fortuitous. We were able to observe the effects of the BJP's articulatory work in greater depth than might have been otherwise possible. In addition to interviews, we gleaned a considerable amount of information through informal chats with neighbours and people on the street, attendance at political rallies, and reading the daily newspapers.

[Picture 1 here]
[Elections in Ahmedabad 2012]

Our respondents expressed sentiments and perceptions beyond interest-based calculations. For many, the idea of development was meaningful because it spoke to their mundane concerns about security, social homogeneity and recognition. However, the same respondents voiced deep frustrations and bitterness with their lack of opportunities in a rapidly growing urban economy, as well as the relocation of families because of urban regeneration schemes carried out in the name of development. Our findings thus reveal a variety of ways in which these groups have translated the BJP's rhetorical claims and practices of development in Gujarat into meaningful ideas and practices for resolving mundane concerns of security, identity and spatial order.[11]

We argue that these mundane understandings of development are a by-product of the *political* processes that link (or articulate) different constituencies of people, while excluding others, through a common idea or signifier. Indeed, these processes not only exclude some constituencies, but construct them as the 'other'. In other words, development becomes a means of excluding some groups who are viewed as inimical to the values and security of those included within 'the developed'. We treat 'development' as both a signifier of a process

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[9] Shah 2002; Sarkar 2002; Yagnik and Sheth 2002.
[10] Berenschott 2012; Thatchil and Herring 2008.
[11] On the link between security and development see Duffield 2007.

of social reorganization as well as the material (if differentially experienced) transformations in livelihoods, built environment, space, and security. The concept of development is inherently polysemic because it encompasses both actual status achievements and the aspirations of individuals in a broader milieu (region or nation), thus making it possible for differently situated people with conflicting interests and experiences to recognize to some common ground. The discursive power of development derives from the possibility of making such a common reference.

Our analysis of development discourse and practice in Gujarat shows, however, that there is no single meta-narrative of development shared by all; instead, the larger narrative is operationalized through several smaller narratives such as security, spatial ordering, and identity that appeal in different ways to different constituencies. While the BJP has to some degree succeeded in establishing the idea of 'development' as a common referent across urban castes and classes, underlying resistance and ambivalence among Dalits, OBCs and Muslims attest to the internal fissures within this project. This is because while there is a strong overlap between caste, class and ethnic/communal subordination in Gujarat (as in India), the longer-term process of industrial development and now economic liberalization, together with state welfare and affirmative action programs, have led to a growing 'neo' middle class particularly among the OBCs but also to an extent Dalits and Muslims. While terms such as 'middle class' and 'lower middle class' are notoriously difficult to define, data shows that the fall in poverty over the past two decades has given rise to a substantial section of the population that aspires to middle class status, yet finds itself outside the reach of middle class stability.[12] Members of this class have some disposable income compared to those below the poverty line yet find themselves perched between the poor and the middle classes because they lack substantial savings or stable jobs despite formal education. Jaffrelot (2013) among others refers to this section as the 'neo-middle class,' which the BJP defined as its core urban target in the Gujarat state election manifesto of 2007.[13] The growth of this class over the past two decades has broken down stable caste categories, leading to internal class differentiation among Dalits, OBCs and Muslims. This differentiation, we argue, simultaneously bolsters and weakens the hegemonic notion of development as some members of these marginalized groups begin identifying with the dominant ideology.

As we subsequently discuss, our respondents did not merely experience development as a remote, top-down project. Instead, given its frequent employment in both popular and political discourse, they had come to accept the idea as meaningful in some way although many expressed considerable ambivalence. While one may debate the use of the term 'neoliberal' to describe Gujarat or India's model of economic growth, neoliberal tenets of deregulation, free markets, the paramount importance of economic growth and an emphasis on technocrats favourable to neoliberal models are core aspects of how development under Prime Minister Modi is being imagined and implemented. Anthropologists who have explored the local ambiguities and processes through which a neoliberal concept of development is implemented have similarly argued that rather than being an imposition from above, it is an on the ground, locally driven and historically contingent process.[14] For example, Aihwa Ong (2007:3; 2006) has suggested that neoliberalism is best understood as a migratory technology that co-exists with other political rationalities. In non-western contexts, she argues, where vast inequalities overlap with situated identities based on religion, caste and ethnicity, neoliberal technologies create new distinctions through notions of self-

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[12] Jaffrelot 2013; Jaffrelot and Kumar 2015; Mandhana 2014; NCAER 2010. The NCAER report refers to this section as 'aspirers' who are neither poor, yet not distinctly within the middle classes.
[13] Jaffrelot 2013:83.
[14] Collier and Ong 2005; Ferguson 2006; Kanna 2010; Ong 2006; Sharma 2006.

improving, cosmopolitan and capable citizens, who are hailed as exceptions to the prevailing cultural norms.[15]

Yet our Ahmedabad-based account shows that although a discursive distinction between self-improving, cosmopolitan middle class subjects and recalcitrant, marginalized groups in India is emerging, subjectivities among the marginalized do not remain untouched by this distinction. Instead, many of our respondents demonstrated a dynamic, if not critical identification with the ideas and practices of 'development' by partaking in the discourse on self-improving and mobile citizens who have left behind the era of Congress-led inefficiency and slow development. In other words, these respondents aspire to the 'development story' even when reflecting an ambivalence about this narrative in a way that speaks to the gap between their material realities and the promises made to them in the BJP development narrative.

The Historical Origins of Developmentalism in Gujarat

Gujarat has one of the most dynamic regional economies in India, with the highest growth rate in the country. Between 2011 and 2012 its annual economic growth averaged around 10%, which was higher than the rest of India (at roughly 8.5%).[16] It was one of the first states to begin economic reforms in 1992 (under Congress rule), and has developed a cross party commitment to market reforms that has proved elusive in many other states. Although the commitment to making Gujarat a beacon of business-friendly capitalism arose during the BJP's consolidation of power, a longer-term view of the growth of the 'Gujarat model' is necessary. The industrial base of the economy and the significance of manufacturing compared with other states was a characteristic of the economy well before BJP rule commenced in the 1990s. The historical advantages of a trader and artisanal base, together with the successful transformation of upper caste farmers into industrial capitalists was given political shape as a form of developmentalism[17] by successive parties in government. Thus the first coalition in support of the developmental role of the state was forged by the Congress Party between 1960 and 1975, integrating a wide base of upper, intermediate and lower castes.[18] Of special significance with this coalition and others that followed was the relatively weak opposition to the state from subordinate classes (ibid.).[19]

Reservations as Signifier: 1970s and 1980s

The first break from the Congress Party's broad political articulation occurred during the Emergency of 1977. A growing crisis within the Congress Party during this period was reflected in a split within the party in Gujarat and the emergence of Jinabhai Darji as a frontrunner in the state-level party. At a time when the Congress was facing declining public support because of its authoritarian measures during the Emergency, Darji forged a pro-adivasi[20] agenda, for example by advocating the abolition of *hali pratha*, the system of providing bonded *adivasi* labour to upper caste Patels.[21] The Congress moved in the direction

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[15] Ong 2007, 6.

[16] *The Economist* 2015. Gujarat is also the second most industrialized state and third most urbanized state in India (Bagchi, Das and Chattopadhyay 2005, 3039), and one of the most sought after states for investors (Awasthi 2000, 3183).

[17] By 'developmentalism' we refer to the role of the state in guiding markets, often in this case through strategic action against the central government (Sinha 2005, 92). All parties in Gujarat, since the 1970s have subscribed to this role for the state.

[18] Sinha 2006, 161.

[19] Leftwich (1995) has suggested that a weak civil society is an important component of the forms of developmentalism adopted in East Asia. While Gujarat differs from the East Asian states in a number of ways, the absence of class conflict and the broad political coalition achieved early by the Congress Party enabled a clear prioritization of industrial growth in Gujarat.

[20] The term *Adivasi* refers to a heterogeneous group of tribal and indigenous communities

[21] Kashwan 2014, 49

of an explicitly pro-poor articulation under Darji, by creating a coalition of lower castes, tribes and Muslims who together formed 60% of the vote share in the state.[22] This unprecedented entry of subaltern groups into the political sphere was achieved, however, without significantly alienating agrarian or industrial capital. At the core of Congress' development strategy was an extensive industrialization policy launched in conjunction with the private sector in areas such as power development, electronics and fertilizers.[23] In conjunction with this pro-private sector approach, Congress Party Chief Minister Madhavsingh Solanki (1980-1985 and 1989-1990) launched an extensive web of social welfare programs such as free mid-day meal schemes for primary school children, free education for girls until university, and food-grain allotments for families earning below INR 5000.[24] These policies enabled a lower caste Chief Minister and a cabinet that represented many Scheduled Castes and Tribes to maintain relatively stable rule.[25] This state of affairs, however, concealed growing resentment among the upper castes towards their exclusion from political power. Indeed, state welfare policies led to a decline in patron-clientelism between the upper and lower castes which in turn sparked violence by upper caste Patels against Dalits in particular. What proved Solanki's undoing, however, was his decision in 1985 to raise quotas for Dalits in government jobs and educational institutions from 10 percent to 27 percent.[26] The upper caste reaction was ferocious and violent, as they perceived increased reservations as a direct encroachment on their ability to secure permanent jobs. Levels of violence against Dalits continued to grow during this period.

Given the strength of the Congress Party in Gujarat during the 1980s, the subsequent ascendancy of a Hindu nationalist upper caste-led articulation and its partial incorporation of OBCs and Dalits pose a historical puzzle. In particular, why did dominant castes turn to violent protests against Dalits during the late 1980s then switch mid-stream to targeting Muslims in the early 1990s?[27] This abrupt re-coding of the idiom and targets of violence is inexplicable without some attention to the role of political articulation. By adopting religious nationalism (*Hindutva*) as its core strategy and identity project in Gujarat, the BJP attempted to break the political alliance among lower-castes which underpinned the Congress Party's welfare developmental model, and replace this with a new alliance that drew together upper-castes, Dalits and Adivasis against Muslims. This involved repeated communal violence, persistent propaganda and community organizing, and the use of religious processions through localities where Hindus and Muslims lived in close proximity.[28] Shani (2005) has compellingly argued that religious communalism was in fact the medium and grammar of *caste* struggle. As older forms of caste patronage were disappearing, OBCs and Dalits were increasingly politicized, thus gaining in importance political parties in search of a majority. In this context, the BJP tried to forge a pact between upper and lower castes by shifting the fault-line to religion and portraying Muslims as the enemy. It is this interweaving of caste and religion through common signifiers of development that, we argue, has underscored the BJP developmental project since 1991.

A crucial element that has enabled such an articulation is the historically weak organized opposition from lower castes and classes in Gujarat in general and Ahmedabad in particular. The sheer size of the informal sector (over 90% of the working population in Ahmedabad),

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[22] The strategy was known as KHAM which is the acronym for Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims.
[23] Sinha 2005, 178; Wood 1987, 420
[24] Wood 1987, 420
[25] The late 1970s-mid 1980s were a period of relative political turmoil across India, beginning with Indira Gandhi's Emergency Rule (1977-78), followed by a period of challenges from other parties, notably the Janata Party (1977-80).
[26] Sanghavi 2010, 490
[27] Shani 2005
[28] Sanghavi 2010.

relative paucity of social security schemes, and harsh working conditions, especially in textile factories,[29] has resulted in almost no political representation for most lower caste workers in the city. Weak associational links among subordinate groups has been attributed to the historical dominance of Gandhian reconciliation traditions and non-conflictual modes of organizing employed by the Textile Labour Association (TLA).[30] In addition, both the communist and socialist left are organizationally weak in Gujarat, and trade unions and rural organizations of workers tend to be relatively ineffective in their use of extra-parliamentary activities such as strikes. The net result has been deterioration in the conditions of workers, as the relatively stable employment conditions offered by the textile industry in the past have been replaced by casualization and informal employment. This process began in 1985 when Congress Party liberalization policies led to a loss of almost 100,000 textile jobs in Ahmedabad.[31] Although new factories arose on the outskirts of the city, they paid less than half the wages workers were accustomed to, and provided almost no benefits.[32] Only 20 percent of laid-off workers found wage employment and these carried no benefits for sickness, insurance or provident fund.[33] The remaining workers had to accept work as contract labourers with low pay and extreme insecurity, or become self-employed. This event signalled the breakdown of the implied social contract between state, businesses and workers and the demise of the TLA as a representative body.[34] The 1980s thus constituted a critical moment in the lives of Ahmedabad's urban workers, a point repeatedly expressed to us, especially by Dalit former workers. It was in this context that the erstwhile Jan Sangh (predecessor of the BJP) was able to manufacture Hindu-Muslim riots and channel worker angst against mill workers.

New Articulations

Scholarship on caste and class relations in Gujarat during the 1990s attests to a growing communalization of political tactics and discourse beginning in the 1980s which polarized Hindus and Muslims. This had the effect of creating new caste-based alliances without disturbing the dominance of specific castes within these equations.[35] This was achieved by using established Hindu-right organizations such as *Bharat Sevashram* and *Hindu Milan Mandir* to carry out street-level welfare activities, with the aim of uplifting the lower castes. These groups believe that the *sudra* (lower caste) has been unfairly rejected from Hindu society, even though they are essentially hard working and able to bear much suffering. Hence their exclusion is seen as the cause of the weakening of Hindus as a whole.[36] The use of street-based, neighbourhood mobilization by these groups, including riots and violence, drew a line between Hindus and Muslims, while enjoining Dalits and OBCs to enter the Hindu fold by becoming participants in the violence.[37] While its success in recruiting Dalits has been mixed, in recent years the BJP has undoubtedly gained more support from OBCs.[38] As Jaffrelot argue, the BJP has, in fact, been "plebeanized" under Modi.[39] The party is still perceived as a dominant caste party, but this perception shifts as one moves from the rural to urban milieu.

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[29] Breman (2004) has described these conditions as a form of "social Darwinism".

[30] Ibid.

[31] Breman 2001, 4804

[32] Spodek 2011, 198

[33] Ibid, 200

[34] Ibid. The TLA was unable to secure more than 20 percent of the redundancy payment due each laid-off worker.

[35] Shah 2002; Yagnik and Sheth 2002

[36] Shah 2002, 1392

[37] Ibid.

[38] See Table 1; Ghai 2012; Jaffrelot 2013a, b

[39] Jaffrelot 2013, 86.

The mixed evidence on voting patterns by caste offers a partial picture of the process of political articulation in Gujarat. A better understanding of how articulation has worked on the ground can be gained by examining the BJP's discursive strategy and its reception among subordinate castes. A key feature of this discursive strategy was the side-lining of alternative solidarity strategies and alliances based on KHAM (unity between lower and middle caste Hindus and Muslims) as well as reservations for lower castes, in favour of an appeal to a neo-middle class identity. OBCs have formed a crucial part of this articulation strategy, as they constitute 43% of the State's population, but are allocated only 27% of reservations. In other words the BJP perceives them as a crucial source of new articulations without a need to provide them the benefits of affirmative action. In place of such benefits the BJP offers OBCs a place in its pan-Hindu focus on development. Indeed, some of our OBC (as well Dalit) respondents partially identified with this BJP vision despite the fact that, however precarious their livelihoods and insecure their conditions of work, they earned on average a high enough income to fail to qualify for assistance such as government subsidized food and fuel.

The strength of the Gujarat BJP's articulation strategy must, however, be equally attributed to the strong charismatic leadership of Narendra Modi. By dubbing himself a *vikas purush* (development man), Modi rhetorically combined the ideal of masculine strength with a steely determination to bring prosperity, order and technological progress to every Gujarati. This discourse, as Jaffrelot argues, "banalized" Hindutva and linked regional pride (Gujarat *asmita*) with 'development' to form an interlocking signifier that reached across castes, classes, and political borders, also drawing in the Gujarati diaspora.[40] In his speeches, Modi counter-poses the BJP's development orientation and entrepreneurial outlook to the Congress Party's slow-paced, bureaucratic mentality and the putative corruption of big government. This discursive frame contrasts a chaotic past (under Congress) to the march of progress since the 1990s. For example, in his 2012 Foundation Day speech, Chief Minister Modi said:

> If we look behind, the first decade of the 21st Century became a decade of development, even though it began with many calamities like unforgettable earthquake, upheavals in cooperative banks and drought in 2001. Adversaries wished Gujarat should never rise, but were proved wrong. Gujarat virtually rose from the debris, converted obstacles into opportunities. We could see the results of our relentless efforts paying dividends. Any discussion on development anywhere in the world would remain incomplete without a mention of Gujarat's development. The reasons or the forces behind this success story are the six-crore people of Gujarat, their unity, brotherhood and accepting the path to peace.[41]

In this context development signifies a market-based path to progress and prosperity, with the removal of poverty through more efficient, non-bureaucratic modes of governance. In other words, 'government' is replaced by 'governance'.

Liberalization and the New Politics

The city of Ahmedabad offers a window into the uneven spatial dispersal of development that has intensified under the liberalization regime. During the first wave of industrialization in the nineteenth century, textile mills were located on the outskirts of the walled city. Residential life was organized into *pols*, narrow side lanes which were divided by caste and community. This created a basis for associationalism and patronage between the wealthy and poor on the basis of caste. Gradually the wealthy moved to private houses in the western parts of the city, leaving behind the textile workers who became increasingly ghettoized in

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[40] Jaffrelot 2013b

eastern Ahmedabad. Most of our interviews were conducted in the former walled city and eastern sections where a clear class division remains. Very few of our interviewees had found regular employment in the emerging industries or services, and had resorted to casual jobs such as bricklaying, construction, auto rickshaw driving, and vending.

Although the distinction between the two halves of the city is important, the social structure reveals much greater complexity. As a result of affirmative action, housing, welfare and other guaranteed income policies enacted by the former Congress government, as well as because of jobs generated by industrial growth, some members of the working class have experienced a measure of upward mobility. For men such as MP, a former Dalit trade union leader, state housing, affirmative action opportunities and other welfare benefits under Congress in the 1970s enabled his family to climb out of poverty. His two sons own small businesses, and the family lives in a primarily Dalit middle class neighbourhood in Chandkheda in north Ahmedabad. Castes in Gujarat no longer form homogeneous entities because of class differentiation.[42]

Several authors have argued that moving into a neo-middle class position leads to a strong BJP identification because aspirational voters identify with the BJP's emphasis on market opportunity, entrepreneurialism, and rapid growth.[43] For example, rural *Kolis* (an OBC caste) tend to vote for the Congress Party (53 percent) but vote for the BJP when they shift to a semi-urban or urban context (65 percent). Yet our findings suggested that there is no firm correspondence between class position and identification with the idea of 'development'. While several of our respondents who had experienced relocation as a result of Ahmedabad's redevelopment or those who were living in particularly precarious circumstances were critical of Modi's specific development discourse, others expressed contingent support for Modi and his claims about development. These respondents identified with the idea of development through more immediate preoccupations with security, order, honour and status. For them, development under the BJP is meaningful because they have experienced improvements in their daily lives.

Modi has drawn a clear distinction between the chaotic and unruly past of the Congress and the stability, order and prosperity brought by the BJP to Gujarat. This discursive equation of development with order and the juxtaposition of an 'unruly and chaotic past' against a future of possible plenty were also repeatedly noted by our interviewees. Thus GDM, a Dalit casual labourer, put it:

> "Since the BJP came there have been no more riots. We live peacefully…ever since we came here, we have been able to live in peace. It is not as it used to be. There is progress everywhere. It feels very nice. It seems like it has become like America now. Gurukul mall, nice cinemas, and long roads have been built…. It looks nice from all angles. It makes you wonder, that there was nothing here before, and now it is so beautiful…. When you go out somewhere, you cannot recognise the place anymore. It all seems like a dream."

Or as another Dalit respondent, KPS said:

> "Under the BJP's government there are no riots…everybody is living in peace. Under BJP rule, we fear the police (law). This is the reason why the BJP continues in power. And secondly, over the last 10 years they have also developed this region….There are a lot of good roads now…"

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[42] Jaffrelot 2013b, 88

[43] The 2012 state assembly elections saw a surge in Modi's popularity among neo-middle class urban voters after 40 rural seats were dissolved and 20 new urban seats added, most of which were swept by the BJP. Thus although 54.7% of the richest people voted for the BJP, 54.2% of middle income voters did the same (compared with 28% and 34.4% respectively for Congress. See Jaffrelot 2013a.

The reference to the law is ironic, given that Dalits in contemporary Gujarat face ongoing discrimination in work and education, and are subject to various forms of social exclusion. A recent report by the Navsarjan Trust documented ninety-eight distinct practices ranging from physical touch to restricted access to jobs, public buildings and facilities, drinking water, and food, among others.[44] These forms of discrimination are not, moreover, restricted to rural areas. Dalits in both rural and urban areas face high levels of violence, often at the hands of OBCs, and the rate of conviction in Gujarat is among the lowest in India. One could argue that it is advantageous for Dalits and poor OBCs to identify with the BJP, because in the absence of strong alternatives (a weak left and weak caste parties) they can gain tangible benefits in exchange for their support. While some of our respondents provided this rationale to explain their voting patterns, most indicated a more complex attachment to the idea of development. This illustrates the need to analyse voting patterns in ways that move beyond self-interest and exchange.

KRD, of the low-caste community known as *Vaghris*, insisted that Gujarat is far more "developed" (*vikasit*) than other Indian States. He spoke approvingly of infrastructure improvements in Ahmedabad such as the number and quality of roads and a new Bus Rapid Transit System, of women being respected and able to walk without fear late at night, and of the absence of communal strife since 2002 in the city. The *Vaghri* community, traditionally associated with exchanging household utensils for discarded clothes, is ritually considered by upper caste members to be low but not untouchable. Yet *Vaghri* community leaders have campaigned for their group to be officially classified as "other backward" (OBC) so that members might benefit from affirmative action policies. KRD recalled the manner in which community leaders eventually succeeded in their campaign to include *Vaghris* under the official OBC category: "Modi gave us our identity," he gushed. These policies have meant that KRD's children were able to gain admission into University and have brighter prospects than anyone in his own generation ever had. Nonetheless, these changes have not made any difference to the continued discrimination his family has faced from their upper caste neighbours, who, he says, disrupt the flow of drinking water into their household taps. KRD and other *Vaghri* families have protested against the high handedness of their neighbours, but to no avail. Yet alignment with the BJP presents families like KRD's with the opportunity to demonstrate to their upper caste neighbours as well as others their own upward social mobility. As MD, a young OBC former graduate student of sociology in one of the city's premier institutions explained:

> The Congress Party is the party of the poor, the party of reservations. They did a good job of getting resources to the poor. But association with the Congress Party brings with it the stigma of being poor, of needing the support of reservations. Even though we benefit from it, we don't want to be seen as such. Supporting the BJP is a way of telling others, hey, we are not poor!

MD's perspective on the BJP contrasts with the more sceptical view offered by PRD, a middle-aged Dalit and former mill worker:

> There is no doubt there has been development – there are roads, big malls, there are big cars, but if you look at the people, the support that people used to get from the government, Narendra Modi has reduced it to half….they wanted to show that there are no poor people in our state…

His view was that Modi's rule is defined by personal largesse, noting, "Narendra Modi holds this durbar, like he is doing us a favour." Yet, while expressing views at odds with the dominant frame of development, PRD nevertheless prevaricated on the issue of security,

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[44] Navsarjan Trust 2009

acknowledging, "There is an opinion that if there is Modi you will be safe from the Muslim." He blamed the Congress government for the fact that "the Hindu public used to be subdued [while] the Muslim community… can be aggressive."

The juxtaposition of a violent past with the peaceful present (under the BJP) was voiced repeatedly by our respondents. The biggest worry KRD and his family reported is that their neighbourhood abuts an established and much larger Muslim neighbourhood: he fears that if the Congress Party were to return to power and there were a communal conflict, he and other Hindus would be killed. "They are our enemies. What else can you expect of them?" KRD's eighteen-year old daughter asked matter-of-factly. This interview provided an interesting account of the way in which a neo-middle class family partakes of the narrative of development, which they equate with the improved lives and status provided by affirmative action, a policy which many BJP policy-makers regard as an impediment to development. Despite facing caste-based discrimination from their neighbours, their antagonism remained directed against (and apparently reciprocated by) Muslims, whose proximity is seen as an existential threat. But even when Muslims are not spatially proximate, they are described in general terms as a source of violence and insecurity that hamper the putative developmental aspirations of the state.

BC, a twenty-two year old Dalit who worked with five different employers sixteen hours a day six days a week, echoed these opinions. He found it stressful, he said, to drive his motorcycle through the Muslim-inhabited Juhapura area of the city. He said he was scared that even if he as much as grazes past a Muslim on the "congested streets in their locality", they will be offended and pick a fight. If the city in general has come to epitomise development and security, Muslim-majority areas continue to be perceived by our Hindu respondents as sources of disorder and insecurity. BC's hectic work schedule earned him enough to keep his seven-member family (his parents, wife and two children, and school-going brother) fed, clothed and housed, but with very little to save and invest. He emphasized the virtues of hard work and keeping his customers happy, avoiding any kind of confrontation with them. But Muslims are always on the lookout to create trouble, he asserted, and- with chilling matter-of-factness- added, "They got what they deserved in 2002".

The anti-Muslim pogrom of 2002 emerged repeatedly in our interviews without prompting, suggesting that it was a key landmark in the larger story that our respondents wished to narrate about progress and development. Their sense of victors and losers in this story revolved around religious rather than caste-class antagonisms. Indeed the salience of this event in the popular imagination suggests how crucial the violence of 2002 was in inaugurating a new social order, a rupture from the previous intermittent rounds of violence in which it was impossible to pin down a decisive 'victor'. As our Muslim respondent, MA from Juhapura suggested, "2002 was like the final round of a sixty-year old war. In 1941, the Muslims beat the Hindus. The Hindus had their revenge in 1969. But the tally was equalled. In 1985, they thrashed the Muslims again, but more lives were lost than properties. In 1990, they targeted Muslim properties but took fewer lives. In 2002, they established their complete, unassailable and total supremacy over us." This event and its aftermath cannot be separated from the mundane understandings of development that our respondents presented to us.

The invocation and subsequent mobilisation of this religious cleavage by the BJP in the context of marginalisation and insecurity for those living just above the poverty line suggests not so much a case of false consciousness but a language that offers the means for improving oneself and one's community. Our respondents generally sought to distance themselves from the idiom of caste although it was clear that caste defined almost every aspect of their daily lives. Yet as a grammar of protest or basis for political claims such as caste reservations the

importance of caste has declined. Put differently, caste-based claims appear to have less of a redistributive grammar and more of a claim for recognition. This echoes the distinction made by Fraser (2000) who suggests that this shift in grammar has occurred parallel to the decline of socialist politics. On the other hand the language of class, which historically has had a weak lineage in Gujarat, appeared only in the most general sense (such as to distinguish rich and poor) in some conversations. In place of both caste and class, the articulation of progress with religious nationalism offered a potentially new grammar of politics. As KN of the *Devipujak* caste in stated, "During the Congress era we had no status. Nobody knew us....people did not count us….Narendra Modi gave us a name, gave us a place in society, the name *Devipujak*. He gave us respect." KN and his wife Laxmi were at pains to explain that after their inclusion by Modi in society caste did not really matter because, they claimed, the distinction between upper and lower caste had all but disappeared. It was Muslims, they argued, who continued to refer to them by their former name, *Vaghri*, which they consider derogatory. Similar sentiments were expressed by M and her mother-in-law S, members of the pastoral *Rabari* caste, whose primary occupation is tending cows in the village-like enclosures of the city. As M put it, "The BJP is for us poor people and the Congress only listens to influential people. The BJP does not listen to the influential people. Hindutva is unity, where we are all one. We have unity within Hindus, but we cannot have that with Muslims. Because they are different. And will remain different." M's view, along with KRD and R's, reflects how recognition rather than clientelism between the BJP and the poor ensures their support.

Spatial Order

The BJP's cross-caste articulation has accompanied two major axes of socio-spatial ordering in Ahmedabad over the past decade, religion and class. This mirrors urban spatial inequality found in countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa.[45] Our Hindu respondents suggested that order was ensured by residence in homogenous neighbourhoods where the chances of trouble and tension are reduced. For example, KRD spoke passionately about how life was better "ordered" now that he was living in a community of Hindus. KRD had moved to a Hindu majority neighbourhood a few months prior to the violence of 2002, and told us how grateful he was for that decision. He had previously lived in a Muslim-majority neighbourhood where, he said, he always had feared for his family's safety. Development processes need order and security, he contended, and such order can only be assured when "you are with one of your own" he added.

That city residents increasingly link the spatial reordering of the city with the development process is evident from our interviews with individuals from other communities as well. For instance, BD, an OBC bus conductor on the municipal bus system, suggested that life had become more organised over the last decade. Both Hindu and Muslim respondents agreed that various neighbourhoods in the old city which they had vied to control for several decades were now socially homogenous. This, we were told, reduced threats to life and property, as people could now live with others like them. T, another OBC respondent, put this bluntly. "Development needs society to be organised (*vyavasthit*)" he said. "Organisation needs stability (*sthirta*). Stability is not possible in mixed communities." Clearly, in the minds of at least some of our respondents, development is predicated on the homogenisation of separate social landscapes. In demanding socially homogenous neighbourhoods, our respondents appeared to have had in mind the social organisation provided by the *pol*, residential housing clusters that dot the old city which traditionally are organised along professional and caste lines.

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[45] Caldeira 1996; Holston 1999

In the aftermath of the 2002 violence, Ahmedabad, as well as other cities such as Surat and Baroda, experienced the social cleansing of formerly mixed neighbourhoods. The process of religious spatial segregation in India and is rooted in successive bouts of ethnic violence since the 1960s. Ostracized and isolated by their Hindu neighbours, Muslims of all socio-economic classes in Ahmedabad fled previously mixed neighbourhoods after 2002. They have settled primarily in Juhapura, now India's largest Muslim 'ghetto', with approximately 400,000 residents, and Usmanpur. These are areas many Hindus perceive as crime-ridden, unsafe and symbolic of the underdevelopment they feel they have left behind. How have Muslims experienced this new ordering of the city? SY, a 73 year old former postal worker moved to Juhapura in 2002 because, in his words, it "is a Muslim area, here we are safe." AR also moved to Juhapura after 2002. He described his experience as follows:

> I had a house next to Gokuldham. In 2002, it got burnt. I did not get anything, neither from the Gujarat government not from the central government. I did not get anything from anyone. Instead, I was put in jail. They said that I was in the riot and put me in the jail. My house was burnt and the things were looted. My five children and I could not do anything. I also lodged a complaint regarding this in many places. In the last 15 years, I have not seen any kind of change. It is exactly the way it was. No matter which party is in the government, there is no support. Whatever has to be done, you have to do on your own. Neither have I heard anything from the government nor have I got anything from them. There are a lot of people in my situation. Not just one but many… those who have incurred total loss… their house was burnt… family members were killed…and yet nobody got anything.

AR attested to the complete absence of infrastructure in the streets of Juhapura, something we also witnessed: roads marked by potholes, broken street lamps, piles of garbage and significantly, no shops or businesses in sight.

> There is no water supply… we get it from a hand pump. It is not clean … not good for drinking. We do not have that kind of income that we spend money to buy Bisleri water… or boil it and filter it… we do not have that kind of income… a water filter, only people who have money can afford it… it costs Rs 4-5000. About the roads after 7 pm you cannot go out… if you go out after 7 pm it is very difficult especially for the old people. Some people have put stones and other things on it… so when you walk… you cannot walk straight… it is difficult to balance… everyday one person or the other slips here. There is no light on the street… if the houses nearby give light it would be good… but then they will have to pay the bill, so it is absolutely dark at night.

[Picture 2 here]
[Caption: Wall separating Juhapura from the predominantly Hindu neighbourhood of Shri Krishna nagar]
[Picture 3 here]
[Caption: Juhapura 2012]
This form of spatial marginalization is actively reinforced by the state at the local level. Arif According to Arif, "Four years back there was heavy rain and the water came right inside the house. So we went to the corporation… it was municipality then… … they were Hindus and we are Muslims… they said to us – "you do not need to work here."
Modi's flagship bus transit system (BRTS) does not reach Juhapura, so it is effectively severed from the rest of the city. Yet it is no small irony that this segregation together with opportunities for international investments from Gulf States has enabled high-rise properties to be built along the major road linking Juhapura to the rest of Ahmedabad. Rich Muslim

investors hold Muslim-only property shows, while younger Muslims with accumulated savings are constructing a parallel world of business opportunities.

The entrepreneurialism of young Muslims in ghettoized areas of Ahmedabad was echoed by others outside Juhapura, although clearly the demarcation of views within the Muslim community about the BJP and development reflect class and occupational divisions. For example RF, a welder in Shahpur, was far less critical of Modi and development than other Muslims. According to him, business had been good in the past 10 years due to the property boom, as 75 percent of his business was in the new riverfront complex. This boom had enabled him to purchase high-tech welding equipment and save quite a bit of money. For him development was real, as he had more opportunities for work and his life was better. He recalled the 2002 violence as a frightening episode that cost him six months of wages, but also something he had overcome through hard work. Conversely, he had little sympathy for the unemployed: "There is work everywhere. But [the unemployed] are lazy and some have alcohol addictions. Many work because they have to and then they come home and take it out on their wives. But those who want to earn can find work." RF is an example of Muslims and lower caste men and women who differentiate between those they believe are the recalcitrant poor and poor but self-improving citizens. Yet, as we have shown, many of our respondents were more ambivalent about linking development and order. Despite the resonance of the broader development discourse with their concerns about security, identity and spatial order they expressed at the same time a sense of dissonance with their material existence.

Precariousness and Displacement

Our respondents' conflation of development, security, identity and spatial ordering should be situated against two crucial transformations. First is the increasing material precariousness of life among members of what the BJP labels the neo-middle class. Despite the obvious infrastructure improvements in Ahmedabad and establishment of special economic zones (SEZs)[46] on the city outskirts, employment and labour market indicators show increased precariousness of life and livelihood. All of our respondents, whether Dalit, OBC or Muslim, lived in *pucca* (built) houses with access to electricity, piped water, medical care and sufficient food. Many had saved for these amenities with great difficulty, often moving out of poorer neighbourhoods which they associated with danger and dirt. Their material circumstances were far better than what they had left behind. The Dalits we spoke to in Naroda aspired to send their children to private schools, citing the inadequacy of state schools. Yet being able to eke out enough for private school tuition simply raised their level of precariousness. A large number of our respondents drove rickshaws for a living, which provides about INR 5000 to 6000 each month. This is barely enough to feed and clothe a family of four. Illness and injury brought devastating effects on families who were forced to borrow from friends and family. Official data corroborate this. The proportion of regular wage earners in urban Gujarat fell from 452 per 1000 households in 2008 to 425 per 1000 in 2012. However, what really demonstrates the increased insecurity of work is the sharp rise in the proportion of casual labour households from 115 per 1000 to 160 during this same period.[47]

Aside from increased casualization in the urban economy of Gujarat driven by the virtual collapse of the textile industry, a key factor that is contributing to the marginalization of lower caste, working class people is the on-going restructuring of the city which has led to growing evictions and relocations to remote areas. This restructuring is motivated by the freeing up of prime property in the heart of the city for commercial interests, and the needs of

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[46] Special Economic Zones are designated areas/regions where foreign investors are offered tax breaks and simplified regulatory regimes in return for investment.

[47]Figures for 2007-8 and 2011-12 are from the *Report on Employment-Unemployment Survey* (GOI) 2008 and 2011 respectively.

the middle classes for spaces of leisure and pleasure. To that end, informal settlements have been declared to be illegal and their inhabitants evicted under anachronistic laws.[48] A discussion of how marginalized communities make sense of, and experience the material and discursive practices of development would be incomplete without a consideration of the far-reaching effects of urban restructuring.

Displacement of the poor by urban renewal projects in the name of development have been studied in Ahmedabad[49] and elsewhere in India.[50] For instance, in 2002, over 400 families of the low-caste Baori community in Ramdevnagar in the western suburbs of Ahmedabad were evicted and their homes demolished because authorities claimed their settlement encroached on public property.[51] Beautification projects have been undertaken at enormous cost to the public exchequer involving the eviction and relocation of thousands of people. For instance, the 1200 *crores*[52] Sabarmati Riverfront Development (SRD) Project is estimated to have affected more than 14000 households.[53] Similarly, the Kankaria Development Project has effectively privatized Kankaria Lake, a popular picnicking spot in the city.

[Place photo 4 here]

[Caption: The Sabarmati Riverfront]

The intended orderliness of the city, informing and informed by a notion of development that is intended to consciously forge social order, contrasts with the ruptures in the lives of the displaced and the evicted. How do poor and working class Dalits, OBCs and Muslims respond to these projects? While talking about the major changes that he had seen in the city over the last two decades, 25-year-old SR, who owns a franchise for distributing mineral water explained:

> The in-city and the out-city [referring respectively to the areas within the municipal limits and outside of it] are no longer in step with one another. If you are in-city, you have everything: parks, gardens, the river, flyovers, public transport, security, everything. If you are here, in the out-city, you have nothing, except the highway….everything is organised there, here it's the opposite.

Evictees from the Sabarmati Riverfront now live in Ganesh Nagar, a temporary camp. The camp is near a huge landfill and the area has little transportation. We interviewed one evictee, MJ, who makes leather items and toys. During the forty-five years he lived along the Sabarmati Riverfront before the development project began, he would display his wares on the pavement of the iconic Ellisbridge.[54] Although the police would threaten him at times, he and other vendors knew how to evade or deal with them. Public transport was relatively convenient, and his commute took about half an hour on foot. Although his tenement on the riverfront was illegal, its central location and the proximity to his place of work had been extremely advantageous. But displacement had separated him away from his market. New customers were difficult to come by, as his neighbours did not have the money to buy the kind of leisure products he sold. The highway abutting the Ganesh Nagar camp connected the city with far-flung rural areas so pedestrians (potential customers) were rare. Of course, MJ was very resilient. After recounting the circumstances under which his family and neighbours were relocated, he remarked that it was now time for him to think of another trade. But, he

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[48] In Gujarat the law mandating the cut-off for domicile in slums was set at 1976, instead of a later date unlike Delhi (1998) or Mumbai (1995).

[49] Desai 2012; Mahadevia 2011

[50] Bannerjee-Guha 2010

[51] Johnston 2010

[52] Equivalent to USD 222 million.

[53] Desai 2012

[54] Ellis Bridge dates back to the 1870s, and joins the western and eastern parts of Ahmedabad across the Sabarmati river.

added, things would change again when they would be dispatched to their eventual homes, so he may as well wait. In concluding, he remarked, "The city has become orderly. At least, now the government can give us our homes."

The restructuring of work and urban space in Ahmedabad has been accompanied not only by a rhetoric of order but also a sense of loss of collective spaces of engagement that disappearing forms of work had enabled. This was particularly acute for the older generation of workers. For instance, according to 57-year-old AN of Naroda, the textile mills that once employed so many workers were not merely sites where their labour was exchanged for wages, but also enabled the forging of distinct and novel social relations, caste discrimination notwithstanding. Daily engagements, negotiations with managers, and collective actions and disputes over wages enabled workers to provide political meaning to their shared lives, an opportunity younger people would never experience. 57-year-old ND, who had been as a low-level clerk in the Postal Department, lamented the loss of these collective experiences since his involuntary retirement fifteen years ago. Although he had received severance package, this was no substitute for the social relations forged at his workplace.

Another respondent, KR, provided a striking demonstration of these ruptures. The son of ND, he is a tailor who operates his own business from his bedroom in the family's three-room tenement in Vatva in south-east Ahmedabad. After his father lost his job with the Postal Department, KD tried to buy a house, but could not, partly because his father got no help and partly "because of bad luck." In 2001, the family moved to Ahmedabad, where they lived as tenants in three different locations along the river bank until they were relocated in 2006 to make way for the Riverfront Development Project. They lived for seven months in Ganesh Nagar, in the same camp settlement as MJ. However, as their final home was not ready yet, they rented a house allotted to another evictee from their old neighbourhood. Their landlord provided no rent receipts, which meant they had no proof of residence and thus could not access public services and other entitlements. "We have no document, and hence have no existence," he rued. His anger mounted as he spoke:

> No doubt much has changed. But life for the poor has remained the same.
> There will always be 20 percent rich, 40 percent middle-class and 40 percent
> poor. The government and society need 40 percent to remain poor. Who else
> will do all the manual work, the scavenging, the carrying of night soil, labour
> in the mills, provide cheap clothes, furniture and domestic work. To develop,
> they need the poor (*vikas ke liye gareeb chahiye*). The poor become even more
> poor. Those who can be a little better off skim all the opportunities to become
> even better-off. The River Front, the BRTS, the Kankaria waterfront- all these
> [development projects] have benefitted those who can afford walks, expensive
> bus rides, leisure. Not us. We are tossed around, to be eventually dumped in
> this godforsaken place. Yes, there might be secure housing now. But all the
> while, we have been paying the price for something we don't even benefit
> from.

Another respondent, GC, who had suffered a major injury at work, was relocated much further from work to make way for the city's new bus system (BRTS). According to him "there is development … that is why we have been dumped here. It is because of progress that we are suffering. Development has nothing to do with us."

Such fragments of subaltern consciousness were evident among many interviewees, especially Dalits. Their anger and despondency revealed that despite support for the idea of development among some of them, the harsh material circumstances of their lives were rarely far from view.

Contingent Articulations

These interview fragments do not alone answer the question of why the BJP has continued to win election after election in the state. But by shedding light on how the Hindutva-development ideological complex has marked the subjectivities of working and lower middle class Dalits and OBCs in Ahmedabad, these anecdotes offer on-the-ground evidence of how the BJP's articulation project linking Hindutva, development and order has gained traction among subaltern classes. Indeed at one level the dominance of the BJP since the 1990s reflects not only the ineptitude of the Congress Party and the weakness of political alternatives, but the ability of the BJP to make such connections resonate. This is limited, however, by two key conditions: the politics of caste and the precariousness of labour.

Caste fissures are still central to the re-articulation of anti-Muslim solidarities, but unlike during the 1980s it is not a shared sentiment against upper caste Patels. Instead, conflicts between Dalits and OBCs have emerged. All our caste Hindu respondents lived in neighbourhoods where neither Muslims nor Dalits were allowed. OBCs claimed Dalits were "unclean" and engaged in "dirty" occupations such as scavenging, cleaning toilets and sweeping streets. But Dalit sentiment against OBCs was equally strident.

"OBCs are violent, not Brahmins…if a Dalit's son marries a Brahmin or *Bania*, then [they] would not come to kill us with a scythe…[but] if our son falls in love with a *Rabari*, *Thakor*, *Vaghri* or *Darbar*'s daughter, they would come to kill us," said one respondent.[55]

We did not detect a sense of weakness or perception of oppression on the part of Dalit respondents when speaking about OBCs; instead, in their eyes OBCs were reaching far beyond their station.

> There is no comparison to our way of living…we are level in terms of
> education, money…even then according to the old ways they oppress us. They
> are smaller, lower than us, that's how they make it, but…I don't let them into
> my house….They don't even bathe, even then they say to us, we are bigger
> than you…where they go to the toilet, that's the place they drink water from
> (this was followed by much laughter).

The friction and hostility between Dalits and OBCs suggests that dynamic antagonisms may certainly be present within political articulations, even as they enable a degree of political stability for the BJP. Dalit ambivalence towards the BJP is evident in these interviews. Contingent support for its security agenda and some agreement that the BJP is a party of development often went hand in hand with anger and despondency. The OBCs we spoke to, on the one hand, expressed strong pro-BJP sentiments in keeping with their inclusion in the articulation project. Yet, when the conversation turned to their livelihoods a far more ambivalent sentiment emerged. Some argued that they were squeezed between the welfare policies of the Congress Party that primarily benefited Dalits, and the pro-rich bias of the BJP. In particular, OBC educational achievements were seen to have been of little use to them, given that many of the young remained jobless. While self-identifying as middle class, their position appeared more akin to a neo-middle class position, i.e. a more unstable and precarious class position.

As GDP, an OBC and former lathe machine worker stated:

> What is the point of believing in the BJP? What benefits did we get? Our
> children have a higher education but they still do not have jobs. There is still
> high unemployment out there….we are left behind…ST and SC communities
> get all the benefits. OBC is a vast community and has 137 sub-castes. The
> government provided 27 percent of reservations for them but it is not enough.

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[55] These names refer to sub-castes of varying status within the larger OBC category, and designate traditional occupations.

..[while] the ST and SC have a small population and get many benefits…for such a small community they have 40 percent of reservations. It is not fair.

His friend sitting next to him agreed: "We feel sad that our children worked so hard, studied so much but they still do not have a job. There are so many vacancies in the government but you will only get the job if you bribe them." He explained that it was *Prajapatis* (his caste) who most took advantage of reservations in education, yet added, "'the government does not give us a job, and if it gives us a job it does not give us our entire salary. You have to spend your entire life in the middle-class."

He added:

All the middle class people have the same dilemma. Because of this, people in our caste start to question whether there is any point in spending money and time on a higher education. The young generation began deviating away from the teaching profession and chose…other businesses. The BJP created this condition.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the question of how people identify with big development projects, and how and why they resist or seek improvement within this order. We employed the concept of articulation to show how parties (or other agents) can play a critical role in creating identification with national development strategies through the micro and macro-politics of ethnicity and class. Our interviews in Ahmedabad suggest that men and women who live at the margins and struggle with insecure work express at times strong support for the project of 'development,' which appeared to fulfil a range of demands for caste mobility, progress, order, security and belonging.

These interviews reveal a mixture of contingent support, resignation, anger and ambivalence in the ongoing formation of subaltern political subjectivity in urban Gujarat. These interviews suggest, albeit as an initial observation, that the development-Hindutva discursive formation, coupled with ongoing economic changes in Gujarat, has not led to a clear hegemony of the BJP among subaltern groups. Many respondents felt that development has not brought much hope or material progress in their lives. On the other hand, there is no clear evidence of a resistant subaltern consciousness. The idea of 'development' has been appropriated and filtered into popular consciousness through mundane concerns about security, identity and spatial order, in which religion rather than material progress is a common referent. Yet many of our respondents suggested that the ordering of their lives through greater security, recognition of their identities and homogeneity of space was an improvement and a sign of progress. We characterise this as a form of ambivalence, showing neither full acceptance of nor resistance to the claims and discourses of the dominant classes. Similar forms of ambivalence have been observed in the anti-austerity resistance movement in Greece, which simultaneously critiques the hegemonic imposition of economic measures and assumptions, yet "recycles" the xenophobia and "crypto-colonial" identification of Greece with Europe.[56] In both contexts, this demonstrates that even as critiques of hegemonic narratives and discourse emerge within subaltern populations, they are ambivalent in relation to extant power and rarely isolated from the hegemonic positions of the powerful. However, it would be incorrect to argue that the subordinated fully absorb or appropriate the world views and values of the dominant. Thus we may not gain much analytically by contrasting resistance with hegemony. Instead, scholars need to more closely address the ambivalence of subordinated groups, among whom social differentiation in the context of neoliberalization continually threatens to weaken social solidarities.

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[56] Theodossopoulos 2014, 488

The broader implications of our analysis stem from the 2014 national electoral victory of the BJP, and the notion among many scholars and policy-makers that the developmental model in Gujarat represents the possible future of capitalism in India.

Yet articulations are neither seamless nor contingent. Gujarat voting data shows that there has been no further drift of the OBCs and Dalits towards the BJP, which suggests it has reached its limit with these groups. What helps the BJP is the absence of a credible alternative. It is important to bear in mind that the historical continuity and consolidation of developmentalism in Gujarat, across regimes and under different conditions has required periodic renewal, despite the weakness of formal associationalism among the labouring poor. The consolidation of upper caste-class hegemony has, in fact, not been as seamless or automatic as might appear; at various points under Congress leadership during the 1970s as well as after the rupture led by the BJP during the 1980s, new articulations emerged to take the place of Nehruvian socialism. The discourse and rhetoric of development as forcefully propelled forward by Modi's BJP since the mid-1990s has surpassed an exclusively upper caste order. This articulation project has shifted the previous preoccupation with caste hierarchy towards one in which a religion-based sensibility that emphasizes a form of society in which security, order and progress are synonymous predominates. This does not mean that caste distinctions or caste consciousness have disappeared, but rather their appeal for protest politics has been replaced by a competitive politics of recognition. Yet the mixed feelings about the Hindutva-development project evoked among our respondents offers a hint that these articulation projects may well have failed if alternative modes of organization had emerged among the lower castes, or if the Congress Party had shown more decisive and imaginative leadership during the crucial turning point of the mid-1980s. In other words, there is nothing pre-determined about the success of articulations. This is because articulations are premised on constructing homogeneity out of the heterogeneity of demands. The current articulations in Gujarat are threatened by the conditions produced by global capitalism itself, which creates a deep ambivalence among subjects who feel they are just outside the reach of its promised fruit.

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